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ABSTRACT

This monograph consists of a paper outlining current trends in education and discussing issues related to the dissemination of knowledge, and a selected ERIC bibliography on this subject. Trends highlighted in the paper include: (1) the expansion of information; (2) the increasing pace of specialization; (3) the tendency of groups interested in education to blame other groups for the problems of education; and (4) the development of public and political sentiment against professionals and experts. This latter trend has an impact on education in various ways: through the inclusion of community leaders who are not experts in education on panels that set educational policy; through the conflict between fundamentalist groups and educational innovators; and via the punitive tone of recent school reforms. Issues discussed include: (1) the need to disseminate that amount of information which optimizes users' acquisition and adoption; (2) the benefits of information redundancy; (3) finding the balance of small- and large-scale concepts in research; (4) the "vividness" problem and use of the media; (5) presentation of information at a time propitious for its use; and (6) different orientations toward knowledge held by researchers, educators, and clinicians. The implications of these trends and issues for educational practice are briefly examined. The bibliography of documents and journal articles on the dissemination of educational knowledge that follows the paper were selected from a search of the ERIC database. Each item in the bibliography contains bibliographic information and an abstract of the document or article. (BC)

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Perspectives from ERIC/EECE

Trends and Issues in the Dissemination of Child Development and Early Education Knowledge

by Lilian G. Katz

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Perspectives from ERIC/EECE: A Monograph Series

Trends and Issues in the Dissemination of Child Development and Early Education Knowledge*

by

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* Based on the opening address presented at Building Bridges: International Collaboration in the 1990s (First Warwick International Early Years Conference, University of Warwick, Warwick, England, March 1993).

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Perspectives From EECE: A Monograph Series

In the course of carrying out its mission, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE) annually abstracts and indexes thousands of documents and journal articles, responds to thousands of questions, and exchanges views with countless educators around the country at conferences and meetings. This monograph is the second in a series of analyses and summaries addressed to topics frequently raised by ERIC/EECE users.

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Suggestions of topics and authors for this series are always welcome. Please contact the clearinghouse with suggestions or comments:

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Trends and Issues in the Dissemination of Child Development and Early Education Knowledge

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Introduction

The launch of a new journal to serve the international community of early childhood educators seems an appropriate occasion to discuss trends and issues surrounding the development, dissemination and application of knowledge in the field. Though the ideas presented here are based largely on experience in the United States, it is hoped that they are relevant to the trends and issues facing early childhood specialists in other countries. Observations from my experience working with colleagues outside of the U.S. suggest that if some of these ideas do not apply to them currently, they are very likely to do so in the near future.

The ideas presented in this paper have developed from 25 years of experience as director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE) at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. Most readers of this journal are familiar with the ERIC database. Many are frequent contributors to and users of its vast document collection. They may not, however, realize that ERIC/EECE is only one of 16 ERIC clearinghouses, each of which is responsible for identifying, selecting, abstracting, and indexing the report and journal literature in its own assigned specialty, and many of which overlap the specialty of ERIC/EECE. All 16 clearinghouses add the information they collect and process to the ERIC database. The ERIC system summarizes the report literature in its printed index *Resources in Education* and makes the full texts available on microfiche in hundreds of libraries and other

information centers around the world, and through document delivery services. The ERIC system also lists abstracts of more than a thousand journal articles in each monthly issue of *Current Index to Journals in Education*, similarly available around the world.

In addition to collecting reports, conference papers and other documents and journal articles related to children from birth to age twelve for parents, teachers, policymakers, and others involved in their education, ERIC/EECE disseminates this information through newsletters, digests, bibliographies, monographs, journal articles and other publications. A large proportion of my own time is allocated to sharing this information with teachers, parents, and many others in the field, through seminars, workshops and formal presentations at conferences and conventions.

With these experiences as background, this paper is presented in two parts. First, some observations are presented on current trends in the environment to which the dissemination of child development and early education knowledge is directed. Second, some broader issues related to the dissemination of knowledge are discussed. I will close with a discussion of some implications of the trends and issues.

Current Trends in Education

The Information Age

It is often noted that information and knowledge are expanding exponentially in all fields. So it is with the field of child development and early education. The ERIC database currently includes more than 800,000 summaries of documents and journal articles, of which early childhood education specifically is only a part. Our clearinghouse alone has been responsible for contributing nearly 35,000 abstracts of unpublished articles, reports, papers, and journal articles from 1967 through 1992. Other clearinghouses also contribute thousands of such documents about young children in special populations—e.g. bilingual and non-English-speaking children, children with special needs, rural and urban children, and on topical areas, including literacy, reading, mathematics, and so forth. My best guess is that well over 100,000 of the documents in the collection are directly related to our field and our work.

At ERIC/EECE we abstract articles from nearly two dozen monthly and quarterly journals and similar publications. Since 1980, 10 major new journals have been added to our field, and more are expected in the next

year or two. In addition, we regularly monitor and peruse more than 200 newsletters, magazines, and other journals from a wide variety of associations, publishers, and organizations whose work is related to early childhood education.

Specialization

Another strong trend in the information environment is the pace at which specialization increases. New subcategories of specialization in the field emerge virtually daily: computing in the early years, early intervention programs, public policy, sub-disciplines related to language acquisition, multiculturalism, play, play-grounds, art, family issues, parent involvement and education, and so forth. At the current rate of journal development we will soon need a journal about the journals in the field!

Trends in Collision

The trend toward increasing specialization, which produces specialized expertise as the knowledge base expands, seems to collide with strong public and political sentiments against professionals and experts[1] that appear to be widespread in some of our countries. It is manifested in the United States by the frequent inclusion of individuals from the business and corporate world on panels, task forces, commissions, and advisory

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[1] Doubts about the practical value of expertise are not limited to education. Dunn (1993) makes the case that those countries with the most winners of Nobel Prizes in economics have the worst economies; those with substantial numbers of active economists have the next worst economies, and "There have been no Nobel prizes for economists from Germany or Japan. Nor have there been prizes for the economists of the fast-growing Asian "tigers" such as Taiwan, South Korea and Singapore." (p. 4). He further states that macroeconomics cannot be observed directly and therefore must be understood through models, and models are never defeated by facts, but by competing models. He adds "This sometimes leaves governments with little alternative to basing policies on theories that fly in the face of experience, until better theories are developed. As a last resort, they might want to look around and see what is actually happening. But that will never win you a Nobel prize." (p. 4).

boards. Frequently they serve as chairpersons, and frequently they are chosen as a way to circumvent the professionals and experts thought to have merely a vested interest in the *status quo*. This strategy betrays an assumption that the obvious interest that business and corporate leaders have in the outcomes of education can make up for their lack of expertise and experience in the field for which they are supposedly generating better ideas, and that this ignorance puts them at an advantage over professionals and experts.

Among educational innovators there is also some concern about what they perceive as anti-intellectual activities on the part of certain fundamentalist or far-right groups. There is a sense in which the certainty and conviction with which these groups present their views is unsettling to scholars and other intellectuals trained to qualify their claims with statements of probability and caution. In times of rapid change in the midst of complex forces, statements of conviction are often far more appealing than reminders of uncertainties.

Perhaps as a result of some of these trends in collision, many of the school reforms introduced in the U.S. in the last decade seem punitive in tone. Some also appear to be at cross-purposes. Political pressures have led to the encouragement of decentralized decision-making about schooling through such strategies as school-based decision-making, local (especially parental and business) input, and participation in hiring staff and setting curricula. On the other hand, national resources are now allocated to national test development and assessment, and pressure mounts in the U.S. in some quarters for a national curriculum. The collision of these opposing trends can be seen at work in the UK today. In the United States, they are perhaps best exemplified in a recent reform act in the state of Kentucky that adopted a statewide (developmentally appropriate) curriculum in the primary schools, but also mandated site-based decision making!

Michael Katz (1992), discussing such reforms as those implemented in the city schools of Chicago, points out that these reforms

> challenge historic processes of professionalization and the ascendance of experts...Although reformers have criticized teachers harshly, they have expected them to transform their practice—by themselves, with guidance from outsiders, or under pressure from lay persons lacking professional knowledge and skill. Reform, in fact, frequently places tremendous burdens on teachers, whose

effective workload expands with no compensating increase in authority or pay (p. 58).

But, says M. Katz, while professional expertise seems to be regarded with suspicion among reformers and activists, "they continue to require data—not necessarily to illuminate the issues and problems, but to support their points of view" (p. 58).

A similar collision seems to me to be the frequent allusion—especially on the part of politicians—to parents as experts, often phrased as "parents are the best teachers," or "the first teachers," or "parents know their children best." At the same time, enormous resources are allocated at all levels to educate parents about how to prepare their children for school, rather than how to prepare the school to be ready for the children. Opinion makers and politicians seem unable to admit or even to acknowledge the possibility that some parents know their children well, and some do not, or that some parents know some aspects of their children and not others, as is true of their teachers.

The Blame Drain

There is also something of a "blame drain" in the field of public education, at least in the United States. Often parents complain to teachers that they don't want their children tested so frequently; teachers respond that they don't want to do it, but that the school authorities require it; school authorities blame district regulators, who blame the state, who blame the legislators, who say the taxpayers demand it; and, of course, a large proportion of taxpayers are the parents! This cycle of blame seems to me to drain energy and resources away from attending to the complex problems of contemporary education.

Issues in Dissemination

As we continue our work as scholars in the field of early childhood education, I ask you to consider six issues related to the dissemination and adoption of the knowledge in our field that we propose to share.

The Optimum Information Hypothesis

West (1981) has suggested that the more information confronting

individuals, the more likely they are to be selective in what they attend to, and the more selective they are, the more likely they are to attend to information that is agreeable, compatible, or even identical with what they already hold to be true or right. Information scientists similarly claim that despite innovations in storage and retrieval of information, in the long term the level of accessibility of information remains more or less constant. Thus, the more information available, the less likely we are to attend to what is new or to what departs from what we already know and accept anyway. Although this formulation of the issue refers to the amount of information offered, it also refers to the rate at which information is made available (i.e., the amount of information provided in a given unit of time).

West's (1981) suggestion can be stated as the hypothesis that there is an optimum amount of information below and above which new information in the form of ideas, concepts, knowledge, facts, etc. is not acquired, adopted or used. That is to say, having both too little or too much information available is equally unlikely to advance the acquisition of new ideas. It is likely that individuals vary in what constitutes an optimum quantity or rate of information availability. It would be difficult to ascertain empirically an optimum flow of information. However, this hypothesis may serve to remind us to inhibit our dissemination impulses, and to be wary of simply churning out more pieces of information. At the very least, we might be encouraged to temper our expectations of the impact we can have and to be more modest in our expectations of getting new knowledge adopted and applied. As we project the development of this new journal, I recommend that contributions that synthesize and integrate disparate sources of information and research findings be given particular preference.

Optimum Redundancy in Information Dissemination

Klapp (1986) points out that the term *redundancy*, though often used as a criticism of an experience, has positive attributes that are not always appreciated. He suggests that there is both "good" and "bad" redundancy (p. 71). Klapp identifies four functions of good redundancy: continuity, communication, identity, and social resonance. He points out that in the social realm, redundancy provides a kind of reassuring continuity. Klapp's characterization of communication redundancy is quite

relevant to this discussion of issues in dissemination of child development knowledge. He points out that

> whether by repeating information within a message or series of messages coming from several channels, or cues in the context telling us what we may assume about the source and intention of the message: that they will not be lost or misunderstood, or the memory tape erased (p. 73).

Lieb-Brilhart (1989) suggests that people acquire information best when it is available redundantly through a variety of channels. She points out that when there is knowledge worthy of dissemination "and that we believe to be relevant to educational improvement, planned, coordinated redundancy is key to the implementation" (p. 8). However, there is an optimum or appropriate level of redundancy; too little increases the chances that the message in question will be lost in the larger information environment; too much increases the chance that so much time will be taken to access and absorb the messages that the energy and time available for implementing the actions recommended in the messages may be diffused or lost.

Optimum Conceptual Size

Occasionally, on reviewing reports of research, especially in the developmental and educational psychology literature, I suspect that one attribute that may influence applicability and adoptability of new knowledge is the "size" of the ideas and concepts they address. If, for example, we inspect the tables of contents of such journals as *Child Development*, *Developmental Psychology* and the *Journal of Educational Psychology*, we are very likely to find that the majority of articles deal with relatively small-scale phenomena, or with molecular or even micro-level variables.

On the other hand, many of the concepts and ideas found in the practitioner's literature seem too large in size to make them useful, applicable or adoptable. Ideas like "all children are individuals," "Each child has his or her own learning style," and so forth seem very large. What are the practical implications of such statements? Should the teacher say "good morning" in 20 different ways? Use X number of different story-telling strategies? Of course, all children are individuals! The assertion is so true, that in a sense, it is uninformative: It does not help a

practitioner determine to which events, situations, learnings or other phenomena it does or does not apply.

The concepts and ideas in developmental and psychological journals in which we write for each other are relatively small in size. But ideas or concepts of the micro-level size are unlikely to stimulate new practices directly, which is the ultimate goal of most dissemination efforts as represented by the ERIC system and by journals for practitioners. On the other hand, the very large concepts in much practitioner literature seem to serve as doctrine, or ideological reminders, strengthening practitioners' sense of certainty (correctly or incorrectly).

The role of doctrine and ideology in the nature of practice should not be dismissed lightly. It seems reasonable to assume that in any field in which the database is unreliable—especially in terms of its validity—a vacuum is created, and this vacuum is filled by ideologies and doctrines (see Katz, 1977). My hypothesis is that the weaker the knowledge base of a profession, discipline, or subject, the more ideology-bound it is. The field of early childhood education is especially susceptible to data weakness for two reasons.

First, the object of inquiry and investigations—the young child—is, by definition, immature. This immaturity means that the organism is unstable. By comparison, mature organisms are relatively stable, if not rigid. But observed changes in young children may signal instrument insufficiency, construct weakness, maturation, growth, or all of the above in unspecifiable proportions.

The second reason for unavoidable data weakness in early childhood education is that the definitive or critical experiments which might settle its central issues empirically cannot be performed. As long as there are any reasons to believe that something is "good" for children, it would be unethical to withhold it from some of them just for the sake of the advancement of science. Similarly, as long as there is any reason to suspect an experience is less than optimal for children, it would be unethical to subject them to it just for the sake of a scientific experiment. Thus the field of early childhood education is marked by the typical problems associated with heavy reliance on clinical cases, clinical data and insights.

Taken together, these constraints on the development of reliable data and reproducible results, plus the pressure to protect the powerless (i.e., children) through commitments of sentiment, set an ideal stage for ideological battles. Thus the specialized knowledge that should constitute

the bases for rationalizing professional practice is constantly in dispute, frequently marked by resistance to counter-evidence, and often imbued with ideological and doctrinaire passions.

The Vividness Problem

Another issue in dissemination is what might be called the "after they've seen the movie they'll read the book" phenomenon. It appears that, at least when it comes to entertainment, reading follows exposure to ideas presented through a more vivid medium. Following a film adaptation, there is frequently a rush on books that had been gathering dust on library shelves for years (note the current large displays in book shops of E. M. Forster's *Howard's End*, and the current high sales of Maya Angelou's work, unprecedented until she appeared at the inauguration of President Clinton). There also exists the process of "novelization," or writing a book after a film or television series has been produced when none existed before! Thus, ideas, images, thoughts, and feelings stirred through the visual media whet appetites for further exposure to the original material.

The vividness problem is not, strictly speaking, a particular problem of the adoptability or applicability of child development knowledge per se. Rather, this issue is related to some of the problems of getting information, ideas, and concepts attended to through one medium in order to get them followed up in another.

If the pattern of reading the book "after they've seen the movie" is generalizable to non-entertainment reading, then we might consider what vivid media are most effective as mechanisms for the dissemination of child development and early childhood education knowledge. It has often been observed that, following formal lectures that include references to articles and books, many members of the audience ask for complete citations and references and show strong interest in obtaining copies of the paper presented, presumably with the intention of following up what has been made vivid through an aural medium. The extent of follow-up is difficult to guess. I know of no empirical studies of this phenomenon. However, if this is a common phenomenon, and the probability of studying research reports increases following a "live" or "lively" presentation, what dissemination practices should we consider?

Inasmuch as we remain largely dependent on the print medium, we might be wise to present new knowledge and insights through a "case

method" of reporting. A case would be a vivid description of a standard predicament common to the experience of the practitioners we wish to influence. The new information and its implications for practice can be fleshed out in terms of the case in a way that may help make it vivid and more easily adopted.

Propitiousness

The popularity of the expression "an idea whose time has come" is probably well-deserved. Not just in terms of cosmic chronology, but in more specific and concrete terms, child development knowledge is wanted and presumably utilized when a particular predicament occurs when a teacher or parent has reached the end of his or her patience. Making ideas, concepts, and facts available when people are at the beginning of a process appears to be ineffective. At that point, the information is merely taken for granted, or cast aside, until suddenly it is of almost life-or-death importance. Again, this problem suggests that much new information might be better utilized if explicated in the context of standard predicaments, or case study formats, that most teachers confront frequently.

Orientations to Knowledge

Another issue in the adoption of new knowledge in early education concerns the possibility that those who produce it and those expected to adopt and apply it have different ways of apprehending and using such knowledge. If this is so, we will have to take those differences in orientation to knowledge into account.

Potential differences in orientation to knowledge can be examined by adopting the framework presented by Freidson in his study of the sociology of knowledge in the medical profession. Freidson classifies subsets of members of the medical profession in terms of two distinct types of "mentalities," or orientations to knowledge and research.

According to Freidson's analysis, persons within the field of medicine can be classified into at least two groups: those with the scientific mentality, embodied in the professors in the medical faculties, who are usually scientists rather than physicians; the other group has what he calls a clinical mentality, reflected in the perspective of the medical practitioner. These contrasting orientations to knowledge are depicted on five interrelated dimensions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Orientations to Knowledge and Research of Scientists and Clinicians

Scientific Orientation	Teacher Educators, etc.	Clinical Orientation
1. reflective	?	1. active
2. conceptual	?	2. pragmatic
3. theoretical	?	3. subjective
4. skepticism	?	4. faith
5. determinacy	?	5. indeterminacy

The first dimension, *reflective versus active*, suggests that scientists—developmental psychologists, or other scholars and researchers related to the field—are well served by the disposition to be reflective and to consider alternative courses of action, explanation, theories, interpretations, and so forth. On the other hand, practitioners—teachers, or child care workers, or parent educators—need the disposition to act in situations of high ambiguity, even in situations in which no relevant reliable information is available.

The second dimension, a *conceptual versus pragmatic orientation*, suggests that psychologists and other scholars in the field seek concepts to explain how something works, whereas the practitioner will settle more quickly for what works, even without explanations. For the latter, the premium is on doing something, on responding to the practicalities of the pressing situation at hand.

The third dimension, *theoretical versus subjective orientation*, similarly suggests that the scholar is looking for theories that help organize observations and build a system of understandings and concepts that hang together coherently and sensibly. According to Freidson, the practitioner is more disposed to be reassured by direct, first-hand experiences, or even

by the second-hand reports of other practitioners' first-hand experiences, than by a theory. Practitioners are likely to accept scientists' data if, and only if these data correspond to their own subjectively derived views (i.e., if they know it from their own experience or at "gut level"); they seem likely to abandon their subjectively acquired views when the scientifically developed knowledge gainsays them.

Perhaps this disposition to rely heavily on subjectively derived views and insights is what is alluded to in statements about the importance of "owning" one's own program, innovation, or idea. The importance of ownership is often emphasized in discussions about the limitations of the so-called "trickle-down" theory of innovation and information dissemination. However, it would be a pity if such ownership were required in engineering or medicine for innovations to be applied!

The fourth dimension, *skepticism versus faith*, refers to such dispositional or orientational differences as the scientists' tendencies to prize doubt, to be concerned about the reliability and generalizability of the results of experiments, and so forth. For practitioners, however, doubt and skepticism may be dysfunctional. For example, strong conviction about the rightness of a course of action may influence its effectiveness: uncertainty in teaching may result in giving children mixed signals, which may in turn cause the children to resist the adult, which may further undermine the adult's confidence and hence the effectiveness of the action taken.

In a recent study comparing the differential effects of three preschool curriculum models on inner city four-year-olds (Marcon, 1992), the data showed that the differential effects were related to the convictions of the teachers. Marcon (1992) concluded that the children in classrooms where teachers strongly believed in the curriculum model they were implementing "did better on standardized measures of development than children whose teachers were torn between opposing models" (p. 527).

This finding suggests that strong beliefs may be related to the clarity with which adults express their values, expectations and ideas to children, and that such clarity affects children's participation in the activities provided. It may be that teachers and parents should strive for some optimum level of faith in the rightness of their actions so that children accept adult direction most—but not all—of the time. Observations of teachers and parents interacting with young children suggests to me that either excessive uncertainty or faith can cause much interaction to be consumed by power and management issues rather than the more important issues related to children's intellectual and social growth.

The term "faith" as used here refers to the practitioners' need to believe in the appropriateness of the action chosen even when no supportive evidence is available. Indeed, sometimes counter-evidence is dismissed on the grounds that it is based on experimental, unrealistic, contrived, un-lifelike or non-naturalistic treatment conditions. (However, when the results of such contrived experimental treatments support strongly held beliefs, concern about methodology is usually set aside!)

The fifth dimension, *determinacy versus indeterminacy*, refers to the scientist's search for lawfulness, or discovery of the underlying laws and theories upon which he or she hopes to be able to make good predictions. The practitioner, on the other hand, tends to hold that events in the real world are far too complex to make discovery of the operating laws possible.

If we accept Freidson's formulation of the two mentalities within the same field as generalizable to our own[2]—and many other fields—then its implications are worthy of our consideration as we develop a tradition for the new journal.

Two Cultures within the Field

The two groups within the field of early childhood education—the scholars and the practitioners—can be thought of as two subcultures, perhaps, each with its own orientations or habits of mind, and to some extent, each with its own language or technical jargon. Table 1 depicts the two orientations in opposing columns. I have suggested elsewhere (Katz, 1987) that those who train practitioners might occupy the column between the scientist and the practitioner, the psychologist and the teacher. What would the positions of this middle group be on the five dimensions? What positions would be desirable ones?

According to the formulation of the problem presented here, a profession contains within it at least two subcultures: Those characterized

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[2] The distinctions between the two 'mentalities' -scientific and clinical - within early childhood education might be even sharper than those within the field of medicine in as much as the differences in training, education, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds between the scholars and practitioners in the field might be even greater in early childhood education than in medicine.

by scientific and practitioner/clinical mentalities. It seems reasonable to suggest that those who actually train professionals—like teacher educators, advisors and consultants—have to be bicultural and bilingual, and to feel comfortable, accepted and conversant in both cultures and languages.

Perhaps among readers of this journal are many who belong in more than one of the three columns; perhaps some operate in all three at the same time or are sometimes in one and sometimes in another. Those of us responsible for training and supporting the development of practitioners —the logical adopters and appliers of child development knowledge—are not really welcomed either by the pure scientist, whose findings we wish to transmit, or by the pure practitioner, whose practices we wish to influence. Each of these groups is likely to see us as deficient in its own specializations (Katz, et. al. 1982). Shulman (1986) points out that

> to conduct research, scholars must necessarily narrow their scope, focus their view, and formulate a question far less complex than the form in which the world presents itself in practice. This holds for any piece of research; there are no exceptions (p. 6).

Given the deep differences in ways of thinking in the scientific and practitioner sub-cultures, there may be an important role to play for those in advisory and training positions in helping each of the two cultures to understand each other.

Conclusion

It seems that, if we are to succeed in getting child development and new early education knowledge applied, we will have to attend to the rate at which practitioners receive information, or at least the extent to which we must compete with all other sources of information to which they are subjected. We will also have to concern ourselves with how to speak with confidence and clarity about ideas large enough to be useful and small enough to help them make decisions about significant aspects of practice.

As scholars in the field, we are also faced with a dilemma concerning the ethics of speaking with caution and appropriate qualifiers about what we do know and what we do not know. When decision-makers ask us for clear, unequivocal conclusions from research about what courses of action to take, we may have to say simply that whatever decisions are taken, all carry with them their own errors, and that the problem is to

select which errors are preferred. The "choice of preferred error" strategy requires moral, philosophical and ultimately political decisions rather than technical or theoretical ones.

The mission of improving practice, by which we hope to improve the environments and experiences offered to all our children is complex, but surely worthy of the hard work ahead.

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Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4 - 21.

West, C. K. (1981). *The social and psychological distortion of information*. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.

Selected ERIC Bibliography on Educational Dissemination

Items in this bibliography were selected from a search of the ERIC database. ERIC Documents and journal articles are listed in descending order, from most recently added to the database to least recently added.

ERIC Documents

ED343203
Huberman, Michael. (1992). **Linking the Practitioner and Researcher Communities for School Improvement**. 31p.; Keynote Address at the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, January 1992). EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

To talk about the dissemination of research is to talk about the relationship between theory and practice. A body of empirical and conceptual knowledge has accumulated in an area known as the dissemination and utilization of scientific knowledge. Researchers and practitioners will interact at two points: as the knowledge base is transferred, and as practitioners communicate their needs to researchers. This paper centers on the dynamics regulating the process of transfer of knowledge from research centers to schools and teachers. A robust finding in the research utilization literature is that when researchers have used an approach to the dissemination of their results characterized as "sustained interactivity," the impact of the study on users and user organizations is pronounced. Basically, sustained interactivity involves multiple exchanges between researchers and potential users of that research at different phases of the study. To illustrate the dynamics of sustained interactivity on users and researchers, a recent vocational training research program in Switzerland, called "Education et Vie active," is described.

ED341500
Bell, Nancy. (1991). **Early Childhood Teachers' Theories in Practice: What Do Teachers Believe?** 21p.; Paper presented at

the Early Childhood Convention (5th, Dunedin, New Zealand, September 8-13, 1991). EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

The purpose of this study was to describe and evaluate the operational theories of six early childhood teachers in a child care center and kindergarten in New Zealand. It is suggested that teacher educators have a responsibility to address the significant gaps in some teachers' theoretical accounts of their own practice, and that practice is most effective when teachers are able to make their beliefs explicit. The teachers' beliefs and practices were explored from the viewpoints of the children, the teachers, and the observer. Observation of four target children in each of the settings was followed by a series of interviews with teachers and children. The data were coded and analyzed. Although the teachers appeared to have many common beliefs, there were individual differences, more in what was done than what was said. Provided are a synthesis of the teachers' beliefs, a discussion of the adequacy of their theories, and an overview of implications for teacher education. It is concluded that teachers must be articulate advocates for their work with young children, and that teacher educators best support this process by becoming partners with teachers in dialogue that informs and transforms practice.

ED339540
Orton, Fiona. (1991). **Linking Theory to Practice: The Experience of the Partnership in Education Project, Strathclyde, Scotland**. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation Studies and Evaluation Papers No. 4. 22p. EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

The Partnership in Education Project works to raise the educational level of children living in a number of priority areas in Scotland. In order to achieve this aim, the project seeks to develop parents' skills as child educators, and foster partnerships between educational professionals and parents. The project's work is based on six principles: (1) valuing others; (2) using experience-based learning; (3) working in small groups; (4) providing opportunities for interactive communication; (5) using a cycle of learning that involves planning, acting, and reflecting; and (6) encouraging interagency cooperation. The Partnership in Education project has learned from the experiences of other programs. These experiences include the successes of the Head Start Program in the United States; the

Perry preschool study on the long-term effects of preschool education, which was conducted by the High/Scope Foundation in the United States; and the Oxford Preschool research project, in the United Kingdom, which examined preschool contexts that stimulate children's complex play activity. The Partnership in Education project has also adopted into its work some key ideas from educational theorists and researchers, including those of Paulo Freire, Margaret Donaldson, and Barbara Tizard. The project has developed programs for joint working between parents and professionals.

ED321744
Rhodes, Valerie. (1989). **Barriers to Innovation--A Seminar Report. Occasional Paper InTER/11/89**. Lancaster, England: Economic and Social Research Council, Lancaster Univ. (England). Dept. of Psychology. 28p.; A product of the Information Technology in Education Research Programme. Available From: ESRC InTER Programme, Department of Psychology, University of Lancaster, Lancaster LA1 4YF, United Kingdom (free). EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

This report is based on discussions and papers circulated at a seminar on barriers to innovation in primary schools. Issues that relate to computers and the teacher are discussed in the first section, including ownership of the technology and models and strategies for inservice teacher education. Focusing on issues pertaining to computers and the school, the second section discusses organizational barriers to the implementation of information technology, the relationship between the curriculum and technology, and the school as a social system. The relationship between computers and society is covered in the third section. Research needs described in the fourth section include: (1) the role of computers in education; (2) social aspects of computer use; (3) teacher development; and (4) developments in software authoring environments. The concluding section looks at the future development of computer use. Appended materials include the text of a paper, "On Defining a Computer Environment for Innovation--A Case Study in Open Plan Computing" (Charles Crook); a project report, "The PALM Action Research Project" (Bridget Somekh); a list of published papers distributed before the seminar; and a list of participants.

ED309861

Clyde, Margaret. (1989). **Curriculum Decision Making in Australian Early Childhood Settings: Do Early Childhood Teachers Really Plan from a Theoretical Basis?** 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Conference on Early Education and Development (21st, Hong Kong, July 31-August 4, 1989). EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

A preliminary study assessed the efficacy of pre-service and in-service early childhood education programs centered on a policy of combining philosophy, theory, and program practice. Questions were designed to: (1) provide data to be used to determine whether early childhood teachers used an understanding of curriculum philosophy and theory as a basis for program planning; (2) generate information related to the topic of program planning; and (3) permit the development of an instrument that could be used throughout the early childhood field as a basis for gathering data for the purpose of enhancing university in-service and pre-service curriculum planning courses. Results of the pilot study supported the notion that some early childhood educators use an understanding of curriculum philosophy and theory as a basis for program planning. Whether this knowledge is related to participants' pre-service or in-service education, or a combination of the two, remains unclear.

ED297879

Zimiles, Herbert. (1987). **Quandaries in the Trend toward Earlier Education: The Role of Research**. 12p.; In: The Lipman Papers: Appropriate Programs for Four-Year-Olds; see PS 017 508. EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

This presentation uses the premise that educational practice currently derives little benefit from the mass of ongoing research as a starting point for a reassessment of the values and goals of research. Particular emphasis is placed on the relation between research and educational practices involving 4-year-olds. The first part of the discussion deals with aspects of research that reduce its effectiveness. These include the disorienting impact of research literature on practitioners; the synthetic role of research and the integrative needs of practice; and irreconcilable aspects of the relation between research and practice. An important way in which research can help the educator is to describe and analyze what actually

occurs in classrooms, and in exemplary classrooms in particular. A discussion of change in attitudes toward preschool education is followed by a consideration of such topics as the cognitive environment of the home, the influence of separation from mothers on children, implications of recent studies of cognitive development, cognitive skill and cognitive stimulation, and the design of schools for 4-year-olds. Concluding discussion profiles a longitudinal study of the beginnings of reading among 40 children; points out the value of the life span perspective for research on young children; and indicates the need for improved ways of assessing effects of preschool.

ED265612
Mayer, Victor J.; Fortner, Rosanne W. (1985). **Relative Effectiveness of Four Modes of Dissemination of Curriculum Materials.** 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 31-April 4, 1985). EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

Four different methods for disseminating materials and activities used in a program to teach middle school students about aquatic environments were compared in Ohio. Six hundred teachers elected to attend one-and-a-half day workshops, 180 teachers attended workshops requiring 10 full days' participation, 200 teachers ordered materials by mail, and 400 teachers took advantage of a museum's sponsorship of selected program activities for groups of students. Questionnaires were sent to a sample of the teachers in each group. The responses indicated that those attending the short workshops used the materials and activities at a higher rate, and introduced them to others at a higher rate, than did teachers in other groups. Participants in the museum program showed the least use. Differences among the teachers making up the groups appeared to have greater impact on use than did the presentation format. Analysis showed that teachers selecting short workshops were less likely to have master's degrees and more likely to attend professional meetings and to participate on curriculum and textbook adoption committees. They appeared more interested in the professional benefits of the workshop than in the larger number of academic credits associated with the larger workshop.

ED239946
Sacramento City Unified School District. (1983). **District**

"Information Centers" Display Brochures About District Services. Sacramento, CA: Author. 19p. EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

A brief description of the information dissemination program of the Sacramento City Unified School District (California) and eight informational brochures are presented. The program involves setting up "information centers" (display boards with pockets for eight brochures) in schools, school administrative offices, and public libraries in order to publicize district services to parents and the community. The topics of the brochures, which comprise most of this document, are: (1) the board of education; (2) state and federal programs; (3) parent participation preschools; (4) counseling; (5) registering for kindergarten and first grade; (6) testing; (7) school nurses; and (8) graduation requirements. This document was selected by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Task Force on Public Confidence as descriptive of a promising practice or exemplary project worthy of highlighting for the California educational community.

ED233524
Loucks, Susan F. (1983). **The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM): Series Paper (Number 2).** Chapel Hill, NC: Technical Assistance Development System. 25p. EDRS Price - MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

The paper presents a framework intended to help in the adoption of new early childhood special education model programs. The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is explained to describe how individuals undergo the change process. The diagnostic component of CBAM is described in terms of three dimensions: (1) stages of concern (the feelings of individuals involved in change), (2) levels of use (how individuals interact with a new program), and (3) innovation configurations (how the program itself is adapted). Use of a practice profile to help disseminators apply the concept of innovation configurations is discussed. Five tasks in applying CBAM to early childhood programs are identified: creating awareness, targeting dissemination, providing training and preparation, providing follow-up assistance, and evaluating.

ED229839
Loucks, Susan F. (1983). **Planning for Dissemination. Monograph Number 1**. Chapel Hill, NC: Technical Assistance Development System. 28p.; EDRS Price - MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

This guidebook identifies the tasks in disseminating new programs and provides profiles for judging their progress. The process of presenting a program to new users is divided into seven tasks: creating awareness of the project, establishing commitment among the users, providing materials, training personnel, planning to meet users' individual needs, solving problems, and monitoring and evaluating the progress of the program. The process further involves determining the influence of the program on the users' behaviors, finding the influence on target populations, and evaluating the whole project. Expanding on the task of planning to meet users' needs, the author offers three planning profiles that monitor how well users are accepting innovations introduced by the model program, users putting the new program into practice, and, in a comprehensive practice profile, to what extent and how accurately the intended model program is being used. The last section describes the vision, leadership, commitment, and fidelity to the model that are needed in users in order successfully to adopt model programs.

Journal Articles

EJ414296
Huberman, Michael. (1990). **Linkage between Researchers and Practitioners: A Qualitative Study**. American Educational Research Journal, 27(2), 363-391.

A multiple-case, "tracer" study was undertaken involving 11 research projects of the "Education et Vie Active" (Education and the Active Life)--a national vocational education program in Switzerland--to assess the importance of contacts between researchers and practitioners. Iterative data from interviews, observations, and documents indicate predictors of evaluation utilization.

EJ381378
Monahan, Jennifer L.; Scheirer, Mary Ann. (1988). **The Role of**

Linking Agents in the Diffusion of Health Promotion Programs. Health Education Quarterly, 15(4), 417-33. Available From: UMI.

Examines the role of state health department dental offices as linking agents in the diffusion of an effective preventive health program, the fluoride mouthrinse program, in public schools.

EJ292095
Hevey, Denise. (1983). **Preschool Research Dissemination: The Role of a Research Liaison Officer**. Scottish Educational Review, 15(2), 92-99.

Evaluates first year of under Fives Research Liaison Officers, responsible for dissemination of educational research results on children under five to preschool practitioners. Response was largely positive. Questions were raised concerning establishment of causal sequence between practitioners' interest, research findings, changes in practice, and possible trade-offs between acceptability and effectiveness.

EJ287576 TM508292
Alkin, Marvin C.; Stecher, Brian. (1983). **Evaluation in Context: Information Use in Elementary School Decision Making**. Studies in Educational Evaluation, 9(1), 23-32. Available From: UMI

The User Interview Survey examined patterns of information use among elementary school decision makers. The goal was a better understanding of the mix of evaluation and other information inputs into program decisions. The study results are reported, and their implications for improving evaluation utilization at the local level are discussed.

EJ381153
Klein, Susan S. (1987). **The Role of Public Policy in the Education of Girls and Women**. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 9(3), 219-30. Available From: UMI.

A conceptual framework illustrates how different public policies have intended or unintended positive, mixed, or negative effects on the education of girls and women. Public policies emphasizing sex equity, sex

differential, and general education goals are discussed. Recommendations are included to help ensure that educational policies help females.

The ERIC System

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In response to queries from the general public, the clearinghouse provides free materials, short searches of the ERIC database, and referrals to other information sources when appropriate. Other clearinghouse services include conducting workshops and making presentations; providing camera-ready materials for conferences; and conducting extensive computer searches (for a fee) on topics related to the clearinghouse scope of interest.

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